

**THE FLORIDA 1998 STATE PLANNING REPORT**  
**ON THE DELIVERY OF LEGAL ASSISTANCE FOR ELIGIBLE CLIENTS**  
for the Legal Services Corporation

**A. The Planning Process and Participants**

In Florida, the planning process to examine, from a statewide perspective, what steps should be taken to develop further a comprehensive, integrated statewide delivery system began with the formation of The Florida Bar/Florida Bar Foundation Joint Commission on the Delivery of Legal Services to the Indigent in Florida ( Joint Commission). In the Spring of 1990 The Florida Bar and The Florida Bar Foundation (The Foundation) brought together representatives from the judiciary, the legislature, the law schools, the private bar, civic organizations, clients, Legal Services Corporation (LSC) funded provider programs and non-LSC funded provider programs to comprehensively study the delivery system and make recommendations for improvement. The Joint Commission issued its report, “ Opening The Doors To Justice - The Quest To Provide Access For The Poor In Florida”, in February 1991 and a copy is attached as Attachment I.

Since 1991, this report has served as a blueprint for improving the delivery system in Florida. The stakeholders represented on the Joint Commission, through smaller and more single focused groups and committees, have gone forward with ongoing planning and implementation of the Joint Commission recommendations. The work of the Joint Commission and its recommendations have served Florida well in its continuing effort to ensure that needy clients throughout the state have timely, effective and appropriate legal services.

**B. Capacities and Coordinated Activities**

**1. Intake, Advice and Referral**

Through a network of forty-seven (47) offices, the twelve (12) Legal Services Corporation funded programs cover every county in Florida. In addition the Florida delivery system has twelve (12) non-LSC funded general service programs, three (3) immigration legal services programs, two (2) programs providing legal services to prisoners, six (6) law school clinic programs, a guardianship program, a statewide litigation program and a state support program. The LSC and non-LSC funded programs work in cooperation to enable the 1,604,186

income-eligible persons<sup>1</sup> to have access to the Florida delivery system. Every county without an office is served by outreach and is within a reasonable driving distance to a provider program. All offices may be contacted by local phone service, and some programs have a toll-free line for callers who would otherwise have to pay a charge to call.

The Florida delivery system is grounded in each local program having established trust in the low-income community it serves. This has encouraged eligible persons to seek help with their legal problems, no matter where the venue of the matter may be or what is the nature of their problem. Programs continue to work together in implementing the Joint Commission recommendations on improving client access statewide, particularly Recommendation 17.

*a. Intake and Advice*

Each provider program in Florida has intake systems in place to enable its staff to be responsive to client needs while assuring high quality representation beginning at intake. At a minimum, each general service provider program has widely publicized its phone numbers for reaching every program office in its service area. Persons seeking legal assistance can speak to a program staff member who will assess their eligibility, priority type and need for legal assistance. Large numbers of clients receive timely and appropriate assistance at the time of initial contact with the local office, ranging from the scheduling of an appointment to referral to another provider. It is key to an effective referral system that local programs are responsive to applicants. Florida programs recognize this and each has established intake practices that have permitted client access to services to be prompt and efficient.

Every program makes special arrangements for walk-ins, emergencies and populations who have difficulty with telephone access, or who have other special needs.

Intake systems at every program efficiently handle requests for service by screening callers as to income and problem type, in order to determine eligibility and to expedite service by scheduling appointments with staff having the substantive expertise needed to assist the applicant.

A number of Florida programs also provide advice or brief service, or referrals after legal assessment, through different modes of telephone intake and assistance which have been determined to be effective with certain types of legal problems and inquiries or populations (e.g., seniors).

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1. This number is based on the 1990 census for persons at or below federal poverty guidelines. Most grantees' eligibility guidelines use maximum income guidelines figured at 125% of poverty

*b. Referrals*

Each provider program in Florida plays a key role in its community as the central intake/referral resource for the vast majority of low-income persons seeking legal assistance. Programs have developed referral networks based upon a thorough knowledge of the legal assistance available for clients from other providers in the community and elsewhere in the state.

All programs make effective use of their networks by participation in and ongoing expansion of relationships that exist with the various providers of legal services. These networks include pro bono programs and other programs offering specialized services, such as immigration or family law. Pro bono referrals are used for cases requiring extended service. Referrals for pro se clinics, where available, are also made for specific types of problems.

All LSC grantees and non-LSC funded providers who are members of the Florida Project Directors Association (PDA) have entered into a referral agreement which affirms each program's commitment to assist in the referral of client matters throughout Florida. This agreement has been in place for many years and has facilitated the acceptance of hundreds of extended service cases through referrals.

A new effort to obtain referral assistance for a special population is being coordinated by Florida Legal Services (FLS), the state support office. Each Florida program will identify an elder law attorney or paralegal who can act as a key contact person for the State Long Term Ombudsman organization to assist clients with severe mental and/or physical disabilities who have problems with a nursing home or an adult living facility.

*c. Strengths of the Current Approach*

Recognizing they are part of a larger delivery system, LSC-funded programs have remained fully integrated into the Florida delivery system. The hallmarks of the coordinated and effective statewide system for intake, advice and referral are:

i. The Florida project directors have participated in an intrastate referral agreement for nearly twenty years which has facilitated the client referral process within Florida;

ii. The Florida programs benefit from experienced leadership, which meets regularly to coordinate program services and to improve the delivery system;

iii. Florida has the most comprehensive pro bono plan in the country, with local circuit pro bono committees, a statewide committee, court adopted pro bono service aspirational standards and mandatory pro bono service annual reporting by all attorneys;

iv. Florida's geographic and population diversity, its urban and rural differences, have been addressed by local programs developing intake, advice and brief service systems which are appropriate to the communities each provider program serves;

v. Florida's programs have built trust in their communities and have developed local networks for pro bono, pro se, specialized and social service referrals;

vi. The intake policies and methods employed by programs assure that eligible applicants will have direct access to the delivery system and will be promptly assisted by the program contacted or be given an appropriate referral after legal assessment; and

vii. Florida programs have the benefit of a strong and effective state support organization with multiple offices which assures collaboration among all providers in the state and has helped strengthen linkages among providers.

*d. Steps to be Taken in the Next Year to Ensure the Florida Delivery Network Maximizes Client Access, Efficient Delivery, and High Quality Legal Assistance.*

Legal services offices from Pensacola to Key West are committed to the continued improvement of the Florida delivery network. The PDA is taking the lead in the ongoing information sharing, review, planning and implementation of improvements in client intake, advice and referral. Within the next year the benchmark plans for improvement are:

i. To facilitate referrals, Florida programs will review the referral agreement, provide information about each program's priorities in the statewide directory, to also be on the new FLS Website in the near future, and more individual programs will develop their own Websites;

ii. To facilitate the transfer of client information on referrals, a committee of the PDA will examine the benefits of a standardized application format for legal assistance;

iii. To increase opportunities for access for clients, Florida programs will become more engaged in the development and services offered by pro se assistance projects at courthouses and elsewhere;

iv. To expand private attorney involvement in intake, advice and referral, Florida programs will increase their efforts, through their local pro bono programs and the statewide pro bono coordinator to be hired by the state support organization, to expand and develop client intake and advice pro bono projects, particularly for non-litigation attorneys;

v. To improve client access, the Florida programs will continue to explore the advantages

of local, regional and statewide hotlines, such as the current statewide older Floridians, domestic violence and children's SSI disability legal hotlines;

vi. To improve client advice and referral, programs will work cooperatively through the Florida workgroup system to develop effective diagnostic intake instruments and checklists;

vii. To improve client intake services, training for new and existing intake staff will be provided which emphasizes high quality legal representation and the uses of advice, brief service and referrals in a client-centered system; and

viii. To ensure continued innovative progress, programs will continue to share information on their work with their communities to redesign intake systems, their new uses of technology and their successful efforts to improve client access.

## **2. Effective Use of Technology**

### *a. State Technology Plan*

There is not currently a formal statewide technology plan. Florida's programs have developed individual technology plans with sharing of information and experiences among programs. The Program Administrators Association, a workgroup for program administrators sponsored by FLS, provides a common technology information and advice resource within the state. Such statewide support efforts have helped programs increase their technological capabilities.

In the initial efforts to implement Recommendation 28 of the Joint Commission Report, The Florida Bar Foundation in the early 1990's awarded technology grants for programs to buy computers and related equipment and software. In conjunction with this funding, the PDA formed a special committee and availed itself of expert consultants to make recommendations to programs on the purchases of hardware and software. Also, Florida Legal Services coordinated The Foundation funding to enable each legal services provider program to have access to the HandsNet online service which gave all programs the capability to communicate through e-mail. FLS also established the Florida folder on HandsNet which is used to post community education brochures, model pleadings, workgroup information and The Foundation program evaluation forms.

Florida programs are periodically surveyed on their technological capabilities to assist in information sharing and identification of new technology improvement opportunities that would benefit the local programs. In conjunction with this report, a new technology survey was completed and the programs' current technological capabilities are:

i. Nearly all attorneys and paralegals in Florida have a PC at their desk. In the larger offices (more than 5 case handlers) these PCs are connected on a local area network and have internal email;

ii. All programs have access to the HandsNet online service. Some case handlers can access the Internet directly at their desks. About half the case handlers have an individual Internet email address;

iii. All programs have computerized financial management systems. All but 2 very small offices have computerized case management. Most offices have computerized timekeeping;

iv. Nearly all offices have in-house or contract computer support, and most have in-house or contract trainers;

*b. Improvement of Statewide Technological Capacities*

In February of 1997, The Foundation and FLS sponsored a statewide meeting, Rethinking Client Advocacy - New Challenges, Positive Relationships, Creative Solutions, attended by 170 legal services program directors and staff. A part of the meeting was a focus on the attributes of an effective delivery system and technology improvement was identified as a key element in building a stronger delivery system for Florida. From that meeting short term, medium term and long term technology improvement goals were established:

i. Short Term (six months to a year) - Expand advocate use of HandsNet and the Internet, post more current information in the Florida folder on Handsnet and make greater use of telecommunications for information sharing. As a result, FLS sponsored a statewide training on use of the Internet, posted substantial information on Florida's welfare reform program in the Florida folder and conducted a teleconference on the new electronic benefits transfer project;

ii. Medium Term (one to two years) - Establish program Websites on the Internet and expand program advocate and community access to the Internet. As a result, 3 provider programs have established Websites, FLS has established a Website for the Emma Lazarus Project and FLS will have the state support Website in operation by January 1999. The number of advocates with Internet access from their desk computer has increased dramatically and FLS has initiated a program of providing donated computers to community based groups; and

iii. Long Term (two to three years) - Enable every advocate to access the Internet from their desk computers, establish statewide technology support capability either through a technology workgroup or a statewide position, and seek and obtain funding and group discounts for technology improvement and Internet services. As a result, the Program Administrators

Association is providing technology consultation support, FLS is reorganizing staff responsibilities so more staff time can be devoted to achieving the long term technology goals and provider programs are continuing to upgrade their computer systems to provide advocates access to the Internet from their work computers.

### **3. Access to the Courts, Self-Help and Preventive Education**

Florida's legal service community has been a leader in developing innovative means to improve access to justice, to enhance awareness of legal rights and responsibilities and to provide the means to seek redress through self-help opportunities. The Joint Commission Report addressed the need to equip the public with the knowledge and means to engage in self-help solutions, in appropriate circumstances. It encouraged coordinated statewide and regional programs while recognizing that, in a state as diverse as Florida in terms of ethnic backgrounds, urban and rural environments, linguistic and cultural barriers, local approaches will often be necessary.

#### *a. Status of Pro Se, Community Education and Access Efforts in Florida*

A wide variety of legal information and educational materials are available through coordinated statewide programs. A statewide domestic violence toll-free hotline providing information on legal remedies and referral services is administered by FLS. Similarly, FLS operates a children's SSI toll-free hotline that assists parents seeking information relating to their children's classification and continued eligibility for benefits. In an effort to provide information on the rapidly changing laws on the eligibility of legal aliens for federal benefits and to promote an awareness of the availability of legal assistance through a special statewide foundation funded project, the Emma Lazarus Website was established. In addition, The Florida Bar makes available for distribution by legal service providers a variety of pamphlets on virtually all areas of consumer rights, family law and landlord-tenant law. These materials are available in both English and Spanish text.

Local providers have been imaginative in creating programs responsive to the unique needs of their local constituencies. Florida Rural Legal Services (FRLS), in recognition of the geographic isolation of many of its clients, is creating the "Free Net" program, with the goal of enabling its clients to communicate directly with FRLS and others from their own local communities by placing Internet terminals and video conferencing equipment in local community centers, public libraries, housing authorities and other convenient locations. The services provided include not only advice and referral in the nature of a hotline, but also involve direct client representation in evictions, SSI hearings, employment discrimination, education law and other client priority areas. Legal Services of Greater Miami, responding to the large number of

hearing impaired clients, now conducts monthly meetings in its offices with interpreters and special communication equipment provided by Deaf Services, Inc. Divorce and domestic issues are addressed by a variety of different programs. Examples include the "Relative Custody Mill" established by Jacksonville Area Legal Aid to provide advice to legal custodians seeking custody of children placed in their care and pro se dissolution clinics established by Northwest Florida Legal Services, Withlacoochee Legal Services and others.

Coordination of efforts with other interested stakeholders in the legal process exists on both statewide and local levels. Both The Foundation and FLS act as resource centers for legal services providers and work with state and local Bar leadership and the judiciary. Service providers throughout the state have worked effectively with public and private entities to meet client needs. Jacksonville Area Legal Aid, using city funds and in affiliation with the Jacksonville Community Council, Inc., established a community conflict resolution program that focuses on resolving disputes affecting broad community issues, neighborhoods or disputes among community organizations. A recent example involved its mediation of the controversial issue of providing meals to the homeless in public parks. LSGMI and the Legal Aid Society of the Dade County Bar operate a biweekly small claims clinic staffed by pro bono attorneys. The Free Net Program, discussed above, sponsored by Florida Rural Legal Services, reflects an alliance with numerous public libraries, housing authorities and the regional United Way. Greater Orlando Legal Services created the Sexual Abuse Intervention Network (SAIN) as a multi-disciplinary, interagency case and services management network designed to address the needs of juvenile sex offenders, their families and victims. Participating agencies include the State Attorney's Office, Public Defender's Office, the Department of Children and Families, the Department of Juvenile Justice and individual therapists and treatment providers.

*b. Steps to be Taken to Enhance Pro Se, Community Education and Access*

i. FLS will sponsor a statewide training for program staff and active community group members on effective community education in November 1998;

ii. The PDA has charged the substantive workgroups to make the production and updating of community education materials a part of their workplans on an ongoing basis in the future;

iii. The Standing Committee on Pro Bono Legal Services, which is staffed by FLS, has initiated a focused review of judicial and government attorney participation in the comprehensive Florida pro bono plan and will complete its report and highlight the ways the judiciary and government attorneys can expand access through pro bono services by July 1999;

iv. The FLS Website will have a community education section available for program



staff and the community by January 1999; and

v. Provider programs will be working closely with local courts in implementing the new “Family Self Help Programs” which are being established by Florida Supreme Court Rules which should be effective by the end of 1998.

#### **4. Coordination of Legal Work, Training and Expert Assistance**

Florida, primarily through FLS, has maintained a strong statewide training program and expert resource network for field program staff and pro bono attorneys. In carrying out its state support activities as recommended by the Joint Commission in Recommendation 25, FLS has expanded the training made available to advocates and through sponsored workgroups and increased experienced attorney staffing has strengthened the access of advocates to substantive expertise.

##### *a. Statewide Training and Access to Information and Expert Assistance for Delivery of High Quality Legal Services.*

In 1997, The Foundation and FLS sponsored a two and a half (2 1/2) day statewide meeting, attended by 170 advocates, to strengthen our collaborative efforts to address emerging client needs as a result of devolution. FLS also sponsored or co-sponsored eight (8) other training events. The attached FLS 1997 training report provides more information about the training provided, Attachment II. In 1998, FLS is sponsoring or co-sponsoring eight (8) training events covering both advocacy skills and substantive poverty law topics. Attached is a copy of the FLS 1998 Training Calendar, Attachment III. Annually, a survey of the field programs is conducted to determine statewide training priorities. A Training Plan Advisory Group, made up of staff from provider programs, develops the coming year’s training plan with the FLS training coordinator. Experts from the provider programs are generally the trainers in these events but national experts, the private bar, the judiciary and law professors also participate as trainers.

In February 1998, FLS sponsored the first statewide pro bono conference for private attorneys, the judiciary and legal services/legal aid advocates. Attached is a copy of the conference agenda, Attachment IV.

In addition to the training events, FLS has expanded its video and audiotape lending library for field advocates by obtaining tapes from The Florida Bar, the ABA, and other legal resources. FLS has also initiated teleconferences on selected current topics whereby a large number of field advocates can participate. With the costs of conducting training events increasing and program resources declining, FLS is planning on making greater use of teleconferencing and videotapes in the future.

Substantive expertise is shared by the advocates in Florida primarily through the ten (10) FLS sponsored workgroups. The substantive law workgroups are: AIDS/HIV+, Community Economic Development, Consumer, Family/Juvenile/Education, Health/Senior, Homeless, Housing, and Public Benefits. In addition to the substantive law workgroups, there are the program administrators workgroup and the pro bono coordinators workgroup. The workgroup members are field program advocates with special substantive interest and expertise who commit along with their program directors to work on statewide issues and serve as statewide substantive resources. The workgroups develop two (2) year plans which are approved by the Project Directors Association. In response to the decreased access to the national back-up centers, the workgroups are expanding their clearinghouse role and identifying to the field programs the particular expertise of their membership so they may be contacted for assistance and consultation. Also, workgroup members are making increased use of technology to communicate with each other and to respond to requests for assistance.

In addition to the expertise within the workgroups, FLS has expanded its staff of expert attorneys to provide greater access to provider program staff and pro bono attorneys for case consultation and co-counseling. FLS has a staff of sixteen (16) attorneys with an average of over fifteen (15) years of experience with legal expertise in community economic development, consumer, education, employment, family, health, homeless, housing, immigration, juvenile, migrant farmworker, public benefits, and utilities issues. To improve client representation in two very technical areas, FLS contracts with 1000 Friends of Florida to assist field programs in the area of affordable housing and with the Legal Environmental Assistance Foundation to assist field programs in the area of environmental justice.

Since the special Florida Bar Foundation grant program in the early 1990's, most programs have been able to use HandsNet and the Florida folder to access legal updates, workgroup information, model pleadings and identification of expert consultants within the provider programs. Almost all of the field programs in Florida now have access to the Internet and Internet training was provided to expand the use of the Internet for legal and information research.

*b. Plan to Develop and Strengthen Statewide Capacities.*

i. In May 1999 the ABA and the NLADA will sponsor a nationwide pro bono and legal services advocates conference in Florida and the programs in Florida, FLS, The Foundation and The Florida Bar are working together in planning for the conference;

ii. FLS, by January 1999, will have a Website that will serve as a site for statewide information, and the link to current developments, substantive expertise, model documents and community education materials;

iii. A training need's survey has been sent to all provider programs and the statewide Training Advisory Group is meeting in October 1998 to plan the statewide training agenda for 1999 which will involve 7 to 9 training events; and

iv. In 1999, FLS will be expanding its use of teleconferences through which many advocates can participate and have access to experts in selected priority substantive areas.

## **5. Private Attorney Involvement**

### *a. Current Status of Private Attorney Involvement in the State*

In June 1993 the Supreme Court of Florida followed Recommendation 24 of the Joint Commission and established the only comprehensive statewide pro bono plan with mandatory reporting in the nation. As part of the Voluntary Pro Bono Attorney Plan, pro bono committees consisting of representatives of the judiciary, local bar associations, legal services/legal aid providers and clients were created in each of Florida's twenty (20) judicial circuits. A statewide Standing Committee on Pro Bono Legal Services was also formed to coordinate and provide assistance to the circuit committees and to annually report to the Supreme Court of Florida, The Florida Bar and The Florida Bar Foundation on the results from the implementation of the plan. A copy of the Standing Committee report presented in 1998 is attached as Attachment V.

Statewide pro bono development and support are coordinated through FLS. FLS, with funding from The Florida Bar, sponsors the Florida Pro Bono Coordinators Association (FPBCA) whose membership includes thirty (30) local pro bono coordinators from around the state. The FPBCA meets periodically and members share information on best practices, new developments and successful pro bono projects. The FPBCA is currently working on improving the system for referring clients who need pro bono representation in a jurisdiction within Florida other than where the client resides and on ways to expand the pro bono resources available statewide to assist programs providing LSC restricted advocacy for clients.

FLS, through a contract with The Florida Bar, provides staffing for the Standing Committee and directs the continuing implementation of the pro bono plan. While overall in Florida pro bono participation has increased dramatically since the adoption of the comprehensive plan, the growth in participation has not been uniform across the state and participation in organized pro bono programs has leveled off in recent years. As a result, representatives from The Florida Bar, The Foundation, the Standing Committee, provider programs, FPBCA and FLS formed a special committee to determine how further improvements could be achieved. As a result, a proposal for the Florida Pro Bono Legal Services Director Project was developed. A copy of the proposal is attached as Attachment VI. The Florida Bar,

The Foundation and two (2) large law firms have made funding commitments to the proposed project. The recruitment of other law firm funding partners is ongoing.

Local organized pro bono programs with their local bar associations recognize the attorneys that provide outstanding pro bono service. In addition, the Supreme Court of Florida sitting in a ceremonial session each year recognizes one pro bono attorney from each of the twenty (20) judicial circuits who receive The Florida Bar President's Pro Bono Awards and one attorney on the state level who receives the Supreme Court of Florida Tobias Simon Pro Bono Award. In 1998, Florida's first pro bono conference was scheduled in conjunction with the Court's award ceremony.

*b. Efforts to be Undertaken to Increase the Involvement of Private Attorneys in the Delivery of Legal Services.*

*i.* The funding for the Statewide Pro Bono Director Project, in the amount of \$ 150,000, should be in place so that the project can begin operation in January 1999;

*ii.* The Standing Committee on Pro Bono Legal Services will be sponsoring a theme issue of The Florida Bar Journal to be published in conjunction with the ABA/NLADA Pro Bono and Advocates Conference to be held in Florida in May 1999; and

*iii.* The Standing Committee on Pro Bono Legal Services is reviewing pro bono participation by the judiciary and government attorneys and is planning to complete a report on expanding participation by judges, judicial staff and government attorneys by July 1999.

## **6. Development of Additional Resources.**

*a. Statewide Financial Resources Available for Legal Services to Low-Income Persons*

Legal services programs in Florida have been very successful in obtaining resources additional to LSC funding. According to the 1998 Legal Service Corporation Fact Book, in 1997, Florida's LSC programs generated \$16,603,492 in non-LSC grants and income as compared to LSC grants of \$12,599,444. The Florida Bar Foundation, in the 1997-1998 grant year, provided IOTA funding to 39 provider programs in the total amount of \$ 12.3 million, with LSC programs receiving \$ 6,026,079.

According to the LSC Secured Site Bulletin Board, Florida programs generated \$19.04 per poor person on average. That is considerably more than the average of any other state in the Southeast and considerably better than the average of any New England statewide program (New

England has the most statewide programs). The average funds per poor person for the Southeast, excluding Florida, ranged from \$9.98 in Mississippi to \$16.75 in North Carolina and for New England from \$8.05 in Vermont to \$18.08 in Rhode Island.

The primary reason for Florida's fundraising success is the impressive community support developed by the existing programs. In Florida, most contracts or grants, including those developed by filing fee surcharges (\$2,715,813 is expected by Florida LSC programs in 1998), are entered into at the county level. Hundreds of separate organizations fund legal services in Florida. Almost all funding sources, except for IOTA, have been developed through relationships built by programs at the local level.

Florida LSC programs will significantly increase financial resources for legal services in 1998 as compared to 1997. For example, in 1998 some Florida LSC programs will realize increases in filing fee surcharges, will realize more Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) funding, and will realize more Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding than in 1997.

In 1997, some 27 non-LSC funded programs, providing legal services to clients in 37 of Florida's 67 counties, were supported by a total funding of \$ 13.6 million, including \$ 5,843,095 in IOTA funding. Non-LSC programs are part of Florida's integrated delivery system and are often able to help clients ineligible for service from LSC programs.

FLS, The Foundation and the Florida Project Directors' Association will continue and expand efforts to obtain statewide funding. In 1997 FLS helped coordinate the development of local program contracts with domestic violence shelters for more than \$1,000,000 in VAWA funds statewide. The Florida Bar Foundation has attracted significant national foundation funding for distribution to local programs, and the most recent example being \$ 1.6 million from the Open Society Emma Lazarus fund for a statewide project to provide legal services to legal aliens. LSC and non-LSC Florida legal services programs realized \$ 42.8 million in total funding for legal services to low-income persons in 1997.

*b. Preserving and Expanding Resources*

- i. The PDA is developing a proposal to establish a statewide resource developer to be hired by June 30, 1999;
- ii. The PDA is sponsoring a resource development seminar to share successful ideas for expanding funding to be held by December 31, 1998; and
- iii. The Florida Bar is actively considering a plan to establish an Equal Justice Fellowship Program through which five recent law graduates each year would be funded for two (2) year fellowships to work in provider programs. The fellowship program would begin in the fall

of 1999.

## **7. System Configuration**

The Florida Bar Foundation is a significant funder of the 12 LSC-funded programs in Florida, 19 non-LSC legal assistance providers and six law school civil clinics, and Florida Legal Services, as the state support and backup center. The Foundation also was the key sponsor of the Joint Commission which, as noted above, initiated an ongoing statewide planning process for the delivery of legal services in Florida. As spelled out in the Joint Commission Report, The Foundation has specific responsibility for ensuring that the legal services delivery system in Florida continues to develop and expand, provides effective and high quality legal assistance to meet the diverse needs of eligible clients, utilizes innovative strategies to accomplish client goals and is accountable to state and national standards of practice for legal services programs.

### *a. The Efficiencies of the Current Legal Services Programs Configuration in Florida*

The current configuration of programs in Florida takes into account the strengths derived from matching local and regional support and resources to the diverse needs and varying racial and cultural characteristics of clients. The significant capability and success of current programs in expanding resources for the delivery of legal services in Florida are noted above. This success has been complemented by state funding initiatives by The Foundation, including a series of matching grants to encourage and develop local program fundraising capabilities. The Foundation is also bringing in national foundation funding to address special issues and is supporting FLS as a state level agent and broker to develop state funding for local program services. The current configuration of programs recognizes the historic regions in Florida that are reflective of the geographic distribution of clients and the private and public agencies that are essential to building support for Florida's legal services delivery system.

Legal services providers in Florida have been designed and configured to facilitate client access which overcomes such obstacles as disability, geographic isolation, culture, and language. Each provider's service area responds to a sensible division of client population based upon the cultural character of clients and distances between program offices and separate client populations. Attachment VII is a map reflecting the service areas of the local programs and demonstrates the efficacy of current program configuration to ensure an even level of client access. This is further enhanced by client referral agreements between programs, as noted above, and The Foundation funding based upon population distribution. The Foundation further augments the statewide delivery system by providing special funding to support programs to serve special client populations such as immigrants, farmworkers and the institutionalized. FLS is supported to maintain the statewide system of program support and to carry out state level

client advocacy.

The current program configuration has enabled programs to develop a base of support which equips them to provide a diverse range of high quality legal assistance addressing the prioritized needs of clients. All LSC-funded programs have at least a total funding of more than \$850,000, with all but two above \$1,000,000. In each program area, non-federal and non-Foundation support, such as local bar support, United Way funding, and court filing fees, is particularly important to sustaining program capability. All of this type of funding is sensitive to local program identity. This strong mixed base of support is enhanced through the availability of strong training, information, and expertise from the state support system provided by FLS to all programs and thus assuring effective legal assistance to clients. The Foundation ensures program compliance with national standards through an ongoing professional process of program evaluations. The current configuration of programs enables each program to be so evaluated on a three year rotating basis. The Foundation is also able to provide technical assistance funding to address any special program issues which may emerge from such evaluations or upon self-initiated requests from programs. Close relationships with the local courts and bar associations, which is a hallmark of the current configuration, also enable the promotion and expansion of client court access and self-help opportunities, preventive legal education and advice. These efforts are tailored to local client needs.

As noted above, Florida has an extensive statewide support system which is ably and creatively implemented by FLS and supported by The Foundation. Individual program leadership, composed of executive directors, experienced attorneys, paralegals, and administrative staff is provided the opportunity, which most take advantage of, to be actively engaged in the development and coordination of resources available on a state and local level and to address specific emerging client issues and to utilize new technological opportunities. Program configuration provides strong alliances with local bar associations under the auspices of a strong statewide pro bono effort that sets standards, provides technical assistance and engages court support for pro bono legal services from The Florida Supreme Court down to the local courts.

Florida has developed a strong information sharing and project evaluation system which is promoted by the current configuration. The number, size, and type of programs currently available ensures a multi-faceted approach to program resource development throughout Florida and the utilization of a full range of legal strategies to address client needs in all 67 Florida counties. The Foundation and FLS have found that the current configuration of programs enables them to maximize the delivery of coordinated efforts to keep programs current in legal delivery issues and to evaluate program progress.

Florida has developed an aggressive response to changing client needs. Each program is

plugged into a state support and planning system which enables programs to be aware of changes in demographics, laws, and programs. Each program participates and fully supports that system and brings its own resources and expertise into the system. Through the collaboration and coordination offered by current program configuration, all programs are strengthened and better equipped to develop and adjust program resources to meet client needs. Florida is prepared to respond to the changing face of legal services. While the challenges are great, the current configuration of programs serves clients well.

*b. Continued Review of the Florida Delivery System*

- i. The Foundation will be sponsoring a provider program leadership retreat in early 1999 to share information on successful delivery initiatives from around the country and to develop ways to improve the Florida delivery system; and
- ii. The work of the new statewide fund developer, to be hired by June 30, 1999, will provide new opportunities for programs to work collaboratively on a regional and statewide basis to better serve clients.

**C. Conclusion**

In Florida, the planning and development activities to further strengthen our statewide delivery system are continuing processes. Strong locally based programs, both LSC and non-LSC funded, combined with strong statewide coordination and inter-program communications and referrals enable Florida to have a broad base of local support for provider programs and an efficient and effective delivery system for clients throughout the state. The PDA and The Florida Bar Foundation provide the leadership for initiatives to continue to improve and broaden the support for the delivery system. These initiatives involve the judiciary, the private bar, government, foundations, community based organizations, human services organizations, business organizations and the general public. The provider programs in Florida are committed to a comprehensive and integrated delivery that provides all low-income residents of Florida with meaningful access to the full range of high quality legal assistance.



